Summary and Implications

Elderly or old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the average life span of human being. Ageing of population is resulted due to downward trends in mortality. For the developing countries like India, the ageing population may pose mounting pressures on various socio economic fronts including pension outlays, health care expenditures, fiscal discipline, saving levels etc. Further, older women have restricted social-interaction, limited earning possibilities, several medical complications, emotional isolation (in many cases even from their own children), very limited knowledge or awareness of their legal rights and natural reluctance to seek justice. In many Indian societies women are considered as second class citizens. They have been lagging behind in almost all walks of life for centuries. They have never been financially independent.

Today many older women have property/money but they cannot possibly use the money or take financial decisions on their own. Social traditions don’t allow them to use their ancestral property / money for their own welfare. They may be rich or poor, yet they always have to act according to other’s directives. In old age most of the older women face family problems like uncomfortable relations with daughter-in-law, limited interaction with children, and grandchildren. Their daughters-in-law don’t like their interference in family matters, children are busy with their jobs, and their husbands invariably have mood swings after retirement and mostly restrict their free movements. Most old women are self conscious. Due to their home-bound lifestyle they don’t attain confidence even in their young life. Changes of appearance in old age, dependence on spectacles of hearing aids, receding hairline, wrinkled skin… everything makes them more and more self-conscious.

Irrespective of economic, marital or educational status, elderly women face an emotional void in their life. This is because of leading a family-centric life, their world revolves around their family; and when they get old they get sidelined by the same family because it no longer requires their services. Marriage of adult children makes matters worse when the elderly lady loses her role and status in the family to the daughter-in-law. Elder women are generally considered as “too interfering”, “too-demanding” by the family and often confined to one corner of the house.

According to World Health Organization nearly 142 million people in the South-East Asia Region are above the age of 60 years. The number of aged people will double by 2020, and triple by 2050 compared to 2000. The average life expectancy in most countries in the region will be above 75 years by 2050. Nearly 7.5 per cent of India’s population is aged 60 years and above. In rural India, 7.5% people are aged 60+, while in urban India the corresponding figure is 7 per cent. According to the 2006 World Population Prospects, India’s 80+ will increase more than six times
from existing 78 lakhs to about 5.14 crores by 2050. Now, 20 per cent of this category in India suffers from Alzheimer’s disease. The 65+ population is expected to quadruple from 6.4 crores in 2005 to 23.9 crore, while those aged 60 and above will increase from 8.4 crores to 33.5 crores over the next 43 years.

India has a population of approx. 60 million older women (60+). Traditionally, in India women have had a respectable place among almost all communities. In olden days in many families and at present in some families ‘GERENTOCRACY’ is respected and senior most male or female exercises unquestionable authority in all family level decisions. But contemporary ground realities vary from this fact. The practices of ‘AGEISM’ which means discrimination of elderly based on age is pervading into many Indian communities and women are treated as second class citizens. They have been lagging behind in almost all walks of the life for centuries. They have never been financially independent. Due to less social interaction they even don’t know about their rights and powers. Even human rights of older women are at stake today.

In India, though percentage wise graying is not very rapid, but due to its mammoth size, planning for the elderly is a Herculean task for the policy makers. The problems faced by the females are more critical compared to that of men due to low literacy rate, customary ownership of property by men and majority of women being not in labor force during their prime age and with only very few in the organized sector. Therefore, the policy for elderly may also need to keep a realistic achievable gender component. It is to be remembered that sensitizing the issue and deliberate public action can dilute some of the adverse consequences of aging. Educating the mass with high investment in human resource development can overcome these problems up to certain extent.

7.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study fulfilled the following objectives.

1. To study the background and socio-economic status of the elderly females.
2. To study the pragmatic status of female elderly at family level.
3. To study the social and health problems faced by the female elderly and their attitude towards life.
4. To study the requirements of elderly females.
5. To study the characteristics of the works in which the elderly people are involved and engaged.
6. To ascertain the level of female elder abuse.
7. To ascertain the level of practice of ‘Ageism’ and gerentocracy in the study area.
8. To access the physical and psychological health problems of elderly females and causes.
9. To provide possible solutions and remedial measures to the problems of elderly women.
To ascertain the views of younger generation regarding elderly care and responsibilities towards elderly.

7.2 METHODOLOGY

The study was focused on female elderly aged 60 and above to ascertain various socio-economic, familial and psychological realities. A total sample of 200 senior female citizens was involved for the study. Further, to understand the views and attitudes of younger generation on elderly care, 200 Adult respondents in the age group of 25 to 45 were considered for study. The information was gathered through personal interview of all samples and also certain information was sought through secondary sources including census and NSS Registers.

7.3 STUDY AREA

The study area includes four mandals which were purposively selected from Ananthapuram district of Andhra Pradesh. The selected mandals were a) Putlur from Ananthapuram division b) Roddam from Penukonda Division and c) Tadimarri from Dharmavaram division d) Bukkapatnam from Kadiri division e) Kambadur from Kalyandurgam division. From these selected mandals 200 senior females aged 60 and above, and 200 male younger generation aged between 25 to 45 years were considered for the study as per details given in methodology chapter.

7.4 COLLECTION OF DATA

Both primary and secondary data were made use in the present study for analysis. Primary data were collected through personal interviews with the sample respondents with the help of pre tested schedule at the living place and work place of the respondents. Comprehensive interviews were undertaken by managing time-bound gaps to collect information / impression / views from selected female older females from across the study area. From each mandal four villages were selected on random and from each village ten female senior citizens were identified for interview. For interviewing younger generation also four villages were selected from each mandal on random and from each village 10 male young respondents were selected for interview. Secondary data were collected from reports available at Project Director, National Informatics Centre, Ananthapuram, Directorate of Census Operations, Hyderabad, Mandal Parishads in sample mandals, Evaluation Reports, Indian Five Years Plan Documents, Economic Survey of India and various published and unpolished reports. The data collected from field survey was analyzed by employing appropriate statistical tools such as percentages, averages, rations, ANOVA and cumulative growth rates etc.
7.5 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data collected from the sample respondents has been collated and tabulated by editing, coding, and computing and analyzed with the help of SPSS package. The descriptive statistical procedures like mean, standard deviation were computed. The statistical tools administered to test the significance of variance are ‘t’ test and Chi-square analysis.

7.6 FINDINGS

A. CARE OF ELDERLY

I. Socioeconomic Conditions

- Majority of the respondents (52 percent) are below 65 years.
- Majority of the respondents are Hindus.
- By and large, majority of the respondents (54 percent) belong to BC community.
- Out of the total sample of 200 elderly females 47 percent are widows.
- 85 percent of the respondents are illiterates and more than 43 percent are daily wage workers.
- Majority of the respondents (55 percent) have pucca house and about 42 percent of the respondents have two living rooms, and the remaining were living in single room huts.
- 38 percent of female elderly mainly do direction and supervision.
- Majority of elderly were engaged in daily wage (44 percent) during last 12 months and almost equal engaged (42 percent) in farm work and productive works.
- Regarding the duration of full time work during last 12 months, majority of the elderly (30 percent) worked for 4 months.
- With regard to duration of working hours per day during busy season majority of elderly worked for 6 hours in a day and during the slack season majority of the elderly (56 percent) worked for 5 hours a day.
- Majority of the elderly respondents (55 percent) had the average daily wages of Rs.100-200 and 24 percent of respondents had the average daily wages of above Rs.200. About 174 respondents (87 percent) opinioned that the wage earned by them is worth of their living expenses and the remaining 13 percent have expressed as not worthy or uncertain.
- Regarding source of income around 74 respondents (37 percent) are depending on wage earning, 66 respondents (33 percent) have income from farm and 14 respondents (7
percent) have depended only on pension/old age allowance. Above all, it is concluded that more than 23 percent of the respondents are depending on wage earnings for livelihood.

- Only 12 percent of the respondents received financial assistance from children.
- Regarding the satisfaction of elderly on financial assistance by children who are either employed or getting other source of income, majority of them (61 percent) were dissatisfied.
- Only 32 percent have own land and the remaining did not own any land. Among landowners 23 percent are having only 1 acre of irrigated land, and the remaining are having un-irrigated lands.
- More than 98 percent of the respondents have no cash reserves and around 63 percent of the respondents have no valuable ornaments.
- About 142 respondents (71 percent) intend to give their land property to their sons and 29 percent had intention of give lands to daughters.
- 126 respondents (63 percent) intend to give their jewelry to their daughters.

### II. STATUS OF ELDERLY

- **Enjoyment of power on other family members:** 70 respondents (35 percent) enjoy high power and 60 respondents (30 percent) enjoy poor power in the family. The remaining 35 percent established moderate power.

- **Management of domestic affairs:** 78 respondents (39 percent) opined that daughter-in-law manages domestic affairs, 70 respondents (35 percent) manage themselves and 52 respondents (26 percent) never manage domestic affairs in the family.

- **Consultation on purchase of households:** 70 respondents (35 percent) opined that they are consulted rarely while purchasing household items, 68 respondents (34 percent) opined as always and 62 respondents (31 percent) reported as never consulted.

- In case of seeking advice, from elders 74 respondents (37 percent) opined that the family members seek advice on family affairs rarely, 66 respondents (33 percent) opined always and 60 respondents (30 percent) opined never.

- Regarding permission sought by the female members to go out, 76 respondents (38 percent) opined that they rarely seek permission, 64 respondents (32 percent) opined always and 60 respondents (30 percent) opined never.

- In case of controlling financial affairs in family, 76 respondents (38 percent) opined that they control financial affairs always, 74 respondents (37 percent) opined rarely and 50 respondents (25 percent) opined never.
Regarding consultation on children’s marriage, 66 respondents (33 percent) opined that they were consulted always, 76 respondents (38 percent) opined rarely and 58 respondents (29 percent) opined never.

In case of kindness during sickness, 68 respondents (34 percent) opined that they received much kindness, 66 respondents (33 percent) opined somewhat and 66 respondents (33 percent) opined that they have given least importance in the family.

Regarding spending of money during sickness, 70 respondents (35 percent) were opined well, 56 respondents (28 percent) opined average and 74 respondents (37 percent) were not happy.

Index on status of elderly

The overall index on status of elderly at family level show that majority of the respondents are having medium level of status (48 percent) and 29 percent have low status and only 23 percent established high status in controlling domestic affairs.

III. a. PROBLEMS OF ELDERLY

- The chronic problems mentioned by majority of Female Elders are (a) Problem of dressing self (87 percent), (b) Ache of knees and joints, (c) Back ache (72 percent), (d) Dental Problems (71 percent), (e) Sleeplessness (66 percent) and vision problem (57 percent).

- The group index on elderly problems shows that 166 respondents (83 percent) are suffering from moderately severe problems, 18 respondents (9 percent) are suffering from fewer problems and 16 respondents (8 percent) are facing severe problems. By and large, it is concluded that above 83 percent of the respondents are suffering from moderately severe problems.

- Regarding elderly care, the group index shows that 120 respondents (60 percent) are receiving moderate care, 56 respondents (28 percent) are receiving poor care and only 24 respondents (12 percent) are receiving good care from their younger generation. By and large, it is concluded that around 60 per cent of the respondents are receiving moderate care from their younger generations. This shows that majority of the elderly are receiving only moderate care by their family members.

Index on nature of family relationship

- The group index on family relationship show that 144 respondents (72 percent) have average interrelationship with their family members, 48 respondents (24 percent) have good interrelationship with their family members and the other 8 respondents (4 percent) have poor interrelationship with their family members. By and large, it is concluded that
more than 72 percent of the respondents have average interrelationship with their family members.

IV. SATISFACTION OF ELDERLY FEMALES ON OLDAGE SUPPORT FROM CHILDREN.

- Majority of the respondents (46 percent) are ‘to some extent satisfied’ and 18 percent are ‘fully satisfied’ on the reciprocative service of their children. It is disheartening to notice that as much as 36 per cent are not satisfied on reciprocity from children.
- Majority of the respondents (40 percent) were ‘to some extent’ satisfied on the prophylactic actions of their children. It is noticeable that 38 percent of respondents are not satisfied on action related to prevention of diseases to elders.
- Majority of the respondents (39 percent) were ‘to some extent’ satisfied on the service done during illness by their children.
- Majority of the respondents (41 percent) were to ‘some extent’ satisfied on the acceptance of elderly advice by their children. More than one third expressed dissatisfaction on acceptance of elderly advice by their children.
- Majority of the respondents (41 percent) did ‘not satisfy’ on the provision of nutritious food by their children.
- Majority of the respondents (40 percent) did ‘not satisfy’ on the assistance of children during bed riddenness of elderly.
- Many of the female elderly have expressed dis-satisfaction of support of children in the matters like viz., (a) Sending for meditation and Palecticassistance (40 percent). (b) Assistance during bladder cantro experience (47 percent). (c) Assistance during bed riddenness (39 percent) (d) Support in cash (43 percent) and support during depression.
- The index on satisfactory level of elderly females on support from children, only one fourth expressed full satisfaction (26 percent) and 40 percent expressed moderate satisfaction. The remaining 34 percent were not satisfied on support from children on select dependency aspects.

B. I. YOUNGER GENERATIONS VIEW ON OLD AGE SUPPORT

- 120 respondents (60 percent) are expecting children’s support ‘to some extent’ during old age and 46 respondents (23 percent) are fully expecting children’s support during old age.
- Around 40 percent have highly positive attitude on parental care, 35 percent have moderately positive attitude on parental care and 25 percent have less positive attitude on parental care.
• More than fifty percent (56 percent) of the respondents were not in favor of ‘Ageism’. However, among the youngsters, 23 percent are fully favor of Ageism and another 31 percent are to some extent favourable in this regard which may result in more discrimination of Aged in Future.

• Regarding gerontocracy 55 percent of the respondents were ‘to some extent’ favourable and around 9 percent are fully favourable towards gerontocracy. They feel that elderly authority is necessary to control behavior of younger generations.

• Majority of the respondents (65 percent) are ‘to some extent’ favourable to take care of aged parents. Alternative strategies are to be mulled on taking care of elderly as many youngsters are not fully favour of caring elderly.

• However, 34 percent were not favourable to provide medicines on time to sick parents which have to be thought seriously.

• About 162 respondents (81 percent) felt occasionally that aged parents as burden to them,

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDE AND ADJUSTMENT

• Around 116 respondents (58 percent) have moderate psychological adjustment with aged parents, 58 respondents (29 percent) have good psychological adjustment in this regard. And the remaining 26 respondents (13 percent) have less psychological adjustment with aged parents. Above all, 58 percent of the respondents have moderate psychological adjustment with aged parents.

• Further, majority of the respondents (53 percent) are never willing to allow children to associate with aged parents.

III. OLDAGE SUPPORT FROM CHILDREN

• About 142 respondents (71 percent) expect old age support from pension.

• Regarding rely on financial assistance on children, majority of younger generation felt that they rely ‘only a little’.

• Regarding opinion on taking care of aged parents, 60 percent of younger generation felt it as a ‘good custom’ and the remaining 40 percent felt that it is necessary as there is no alternative support.

IV. FAMILY PLANNING, CHILDREN’S EDUCATION AND MARRAGE

• Above all, it is concluded that 98 per cent of the respondents know about tubectomy and still 30 percent of the respondents do not have knowledge on the temporary family planning methods.

• About 196 respondents (98 percent) have good opinion on family planning
• Tubectomy was the most popular and acceptable method of family planning in the study area as more than 55 percent adopted it.

• About 44 members are not practicing any family planning method, when they are probed for reasons majority of them (47 percent) stated that they need more number of children.

V. EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN

• Around 180 respondents (90 percent) opined to educate their children up to college level and 146 respondents (73 percent) opined to educate their daughters up to college.

• About 172 respondents (86 percent) are feeling that education of their children is somewhat burden.

• Regarding expectation on children’s profession, majority of respondents (47 percent) expressed that they wish to see their children as Government Employees and with regard to benefits of providing education to daughters,
  a) 49 percent were uncertain,
  b) 29 percent felt educated daughters good alliance and 22 percent thought education of daughter leads to better education for children.

VI. CHILDREN’S MARRIAGE

• Regarding decision on children’s marriage, majority of the respondents (60 percent) felt that, it has to be done by parents.

• Most of the respondents felt that ‘22’ years as the preferred age for marriage of their sons and around 25 percent have preferred 17 years as right age to arrange marriage to their daughters.

7.7 SUGGESTIONS

• Only 12 percent of the respondent’s children provide financial assistance. Hence younger generations are to be provided with adequate income resource, to help aged parents.

• More than 72 percent of the elderly respondents opined that the resources they had for the maintenance of family is little low. Hence alternative sources where aged females can fit in one to be devised.

• More than 98 percent of the respondents have no cash reserves and around 63 percent of the respondents have no valuable ornaments. Monthly saving schemes exclusively for elderly are to be mulled out.

• Majority of the respondents (48 percent) are having medium level of status. So the status of the elderly must be improved so that the elderly can lead the rest of the life with aplomb.
The chronic problems mentioned by majority of Female Elders are (a) Problem of dressing self (87 percent), (b) Ache of knees and joints, (c) Back ache (72 percent), (d) Dental Problems (71 percent), (e) Sleeplessness (66 percent) and vision problem (57 percent). The rural health personnel have to think to provide relief on these problems.

Around 166 respondents (83 percent) are suffering from moderately severe problems and hence their problems are to be studied and appropriate agencies are to be given resources and authority to address them.

The elderly care the group index shows that 122 respondents (61 percent) are receiving only moderate care from children and hence proper counseling strategy has to be used to educate children, and it is responsibility of govt. to increase old age benefit schemes.

The index on family relationships shows that 146 respondents (73 percent) have average interrelationship with their family members. Hence family counseling centres are to be opened at the premises of Primary Health Centres.

More than 40 percent of the respondents didn’t satisfy on the provision of nutritious food by their children. Hence subsidized nutritious food has to be made available at Govt. Rural Networks.

Majority of the elderly (40 percent) did not satisfy on the assistance of children during bed riddenness. Hence children are to be motivated through special education programmes to realize their responsibilities when elders feel ill.

58 percent of the respondents have moderate psychological adjustment with their aged parents. The attitude of the younger generation should be changed and they must adjust with their parents out and out.

Majority of the respondents (53 percent) are never willing to allow children to associate with aged parents. This led isolation which in turn succumbed to mental agony and finally reading to depression. Family counseling centres have played crucial role in this type of situations.

It is to be remembered that sensitizing the issue and deliberate public action can dilute some of the adverse consequences of aging.

Educating the mass with high investment in human resource development can overcome elderly problems ‘to some extent’.

With regard to attitude of children on parental care 40 percent of them have highly positive attitude, 36 percent have moderately positive attitude and 24 percent of the have less positive attitude on parental care. The school syllabus has to be re-oriented to include more
topics on importance of family relationships, elderly care; and reciprocal responsibilities of children towards parents.

- More than fifty percent (56 percent) of the respondents were not in favour of ‘Ageism’. However among the youngsters, 23 percent are fully favour of Ageism and another 21 percent are ‘to some extent’ favourable in this regard which may result in more discrimination of Aged in Future.

- Gerentocracy’ is not approved by many younger generations. However 22 percent are favoring it ‘to some extent’ and 9 percent are favoring it fully. They feel that elderly authority is necessary to control behavior of younger generations.

- It is dis-heartening to notice that more than three fourths of younger generations occasionally feel ‘aged parents’ as burden. This may be because of unemployment and lack of sufficient resources to take care of their elder parents. More self-employment schemes through National Banks Financial Assistance are to be planned to increase resources of younger generation.

- Governments has to plan for mobile health clinics to reach the villages and provide health care at door steps of elderly.

- Pension amount has to be increased for lonely elderly females.